

## Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

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TAGS: CG

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE ON ZAIRE

FOLLOWING ARTICLE WRITTEN BY ROWLAND EVANS AND ROBERT NOVAK APPEARED IN WASHINGTON POST JULY 14. THERE WERE NO RPT NO QUERIES ABOUT ARTICLE AT DEPARTMENT NOON PRESS BRIEFING.

QTE KINSHASA, ZAIRE - A NEW SOVIET-SUPPORTED MILITARY THRUST AGAINST PRO-WESTERN ZAIRE IS BEING PREPARED FOR LATER THIS YEAR, AND PRESIDENT MOBUTU SESE SEKO KNOWS HE CANNOT COUNT ON ONE DOLLAR'S WORTH OF U.S. ARMS UNDER THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S APPROACH TO AFRICA.

"IT APPEARS TO BE THE ENEMY'S INTENTION THAT THEY WILL ATTACK AGAIN," MOBUTU TOLD US IN AN INTERVIEW AT THE PRESIDENTIAL MANSION. PLANS OF COMMUNIST-BACKED REBELS TO RESUME THEIR ASSAULT ON SHABA (FORMERLY KATANGA) PROVINCE IN SOUTHERN ZAIRE ARE CONFIRMED BY NON-ZAIRIAN SOURCES.

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BUT THESE SOURCES EXPECT THE NEW "ATTACK" FROM ANGOLA WILL NOT BE ANOTHER INVASION BUT AN INFILTRATION FOR PROTRACTED GUERRILLA WARFARE. WHETHER AN INVASION OR INFILTRATION, MOBUTU BELIEVES ASSISTANCE FOR THE KATANGAN REBELS FROM ANGOLA AND CUBA ORIGINATES IN MOSCOW. "ANGOLA AND CUBA ARE PAWNS OF SOVIET POLICY IN THIS AREA," HE TOLD US.

HAVING PROVED IT WOULD LET MOBUTU BE SWEEPED UNDER BY INVASION LAST MARCH, THE UNITED STATES WILL NOT HELP HIM AGAINST THE MORE SUBTLE MENACE OF GUERRILLA WAR. WHEN THE LONG, INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND MOBUTU IS CONSIDERED, THE REST OF AFRICA IS BEING SHOWN THE DUBIOUS VALUE OF CLOSE FRIENDSHIP WITH THE AMERICANS IN FACE OF COMMUNIST ASSULT.

THIS ARM'S-LENGTH U.S. ATTITUDE TOWARD A LONGTIME CLIENT REPRESENTS NOT ONLY THE POST-VIETNAM PHOBIA ABOUT MILITARY ENTANGLEMENTS BUT ALSO REVEALS STARKLY OPPOSED VIEWS OF AFRICA IN WASHINGTON AND KINSHASA. WHEREAS THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, AN OCEAN AWAY, NOW PERCEIVES NO DANGER IN SOVIET PENETRATION, THE CAGEY SURVIVOR OF CONGO BLOOD POLITICS BELIEVES MOSCOW SEEKS DOMINATION OVER THE ENTIRE CONTINENT--A SINISTER DEVELOPMENT PROMOTED BY THE NEW U.S. POLICY.

MOBUTU'S APPRECIATION OF SUPERPOWER INTERPLAY IN AFRICA WAS PUT TO US PRECISELY: "BEFORE THE VIETNAM WAR, THE U.S.S.R. WAS NOT SO FIERCE IN TRYING TO IMPOSE ITS IDEOLOGY ON AFRICA. SINCE THE VIETNAM WAR, WHICH HAS TRAUMATIZED THE UNITED STATES, IT HAS BECOME BOLDER. AS WAS WITNESSED IN ANGOLA, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE UNITED STATES IS NOT PREPARED TO INTERVENE IN THE AFFAIRS

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OF AFRICA. THE SOVIET UNION THEREFORE FEELS ABLE TO IMPOSE ITS OWN WILL IN AFRICA."

THE GRAVITY OF THIS SITUATION IS UNDERLINED BY MOBUTU'S ANSWER WHEN WE ASKED WHO COULD BE THE BLOCKING FORCE AGAINST SOVIET AMBITIONS IN AFRICA REPLACING THE UNITED STATES: "IT WOULD HAVE TO BE FRANCE." PRESIDENT VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING DID ARRANGE THE MOROCCAN TROOP INTERVENTION THAT SAVED THE MOBUTU REGIME, AND SINCE THEN MOBUTU HAS GROWN CLOSE TO FRANCE, MOROCCO AND FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICA. BUT NOBODY IMAGINES FRANCE CAN DETER SOVIET ADVENTURES THROUGHOUT SOUTHERN AFRICA AS THE UNITED STATES ONCE DID.

MOBUTU IS NOT CRYING WOLF. RELIABLE EYEWITNESSES TELL OF KATANGAN REBELS IN FOUR NORTHERN ANGOLA TRAINING CAMPS LEARNING GUERRILLA TACTICS IN TIME FOR THE RAINY SEASON THAT STARTS IN MID-SEPTEMBER. UNABLE TO STOP A DIRECT INVASION, THE MISERABLY LED ZAIRIAN ARMY IS ILL EQUIPPED TO HANDLE AN EFFECTIVE INSURGENCY IN AN AREA WHERE THE INFILTRATORS MAY HAVE MORE POPULAR SUPPORT THAN THE MOBUTU REGIME.

DESPERATELY NEEDING REORGANIZATION, ZAIRE'S FORCES ARE GETTING ADVICE FROM THE FRENCH AND BELGIAN MILITARY MISSIONS. BUT THEY WILL HAVE NO ACCESS TO THE GUERRILLA WARFARE LESSONS THE UNITED STATES COULD PROVIDE. THAT SIMPLY IS NOT PART OF WASHINGTON'S NEW AFRICA POLICY.

MOBUTU IS A CANNY ENOUGH POLITICIAN NOT TO ENDANGER GENEROUS U.S. ECONOMIC AID INDISPENSABLE TO ZAIRE BECAUSE OF THE PROLONGED DEPRESSION IN WORLD COPPER PRICES. CONSEQUENTLY, HE HAS CEASED HIS BITTER RECRIMINATIONS AGAINST WASHINGTON AND NEVER UTTERS ONE CRITICAL WORD ABOUT JIMMY CARTER. HE EVEN TOLD US, UNCLASSIFIED

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"THINGS ARE SETTLED DOWN BETWEEN AMBASSADOR (ANDREW) YOUNG AND ME."

BUT INSIDERS SAY MOBUTU WILL NEVER FULLY RECOVER FROM THE US REFUSAL TO HELP -EVEN TO SUPPLY AMMUNITION FOR M-16 RIFLES PREVIOUSLY SOLD TO ZAIRE. WHILE WATCHING HIS WORDS, HE DID TELL US HE WAS "VERY, VERY DISAPPOINTED AND SURPRISED" BY THE US RESPONSE LAST SPRING. DESPITE HIS PATCHED-UP FEUD WITH YOUNG, MOBUTU DESCRIBED YOUNG'S "THEORY" ON WARMER US RELATIONS WITH MARXIST STATES IN AFRICA AS "NOT REALLY PRACTICAL."

MOBUTU'S CONCERN WITH THE MARXIST STATES STEMS FROM WHOLLY PRACTICAL FACTORS. THE COMMUNIST TRIUMPH IN ANGOLA CLOSED ONE RAIL ROUTE TO THE SEA FOR ZAIRE'S COPPER, AND NOW MOBUTU IS KNOWN TO BE WORRIED ABOUT THE SAME THING HAPPENING IN RHODESIA -- EFFECTIVELY BLOCKADING ZAIRE.

SO MOBUTU TOLD US HE PREFERS A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT RETAINING RHODESIA'S "VERY STRONG ECONOMIC STRUCTURE" - A SENTIMENT NOT PARTICULARLY SHARED BY THE LEFT-WING HEADS OF THE AFRICAN "FRONT-LINE" STATES TO WHICH THE UNITED STATES, GREAT BRITAIN AND THE REST OF THE WEST LOOK FOR LEADERSHIP. MOBUTU CONSIDERS IT "SOMEWHAT RIDICULOUS" THAT HE IS IGNORED ON RHODESIA, BUT THAT ONLY FITS INTO THE TRAGIC COURSE OF EVENTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA TODAY. VANCE

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